

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 10340

LIMDIS

AF FOR MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIAN PROPOSALS

REF: (A) STATE 212757, (B) LAGOS 10289

1. GENERAL OUTLOOK: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO BACK THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS AND THAT OBANSANJO AND GARBA WORKED VIGOROUSLY DURING THEIR RECENT EAST AFRICAN TOUR TO ENLIST SUPPORT FOR THOSE PROPOSALS. MOREOVER, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT NIGERIA WILL SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL WE WILL BE MAKING TO APPOINT A UN REPRESENTATIVE FOR NEGOTIATIONS. AS FAR AS NIGERIA IS CONSIDERED, THEREFORE, THE OUTLOOK IS PRESENTLY AS GOOD AS WE COULD HOPE FOR. THIS POSITIVE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH IT HAS EXPRESSED PUBLICLY, LEAVES IT SOMEWHAT VULNERABLE, HOWEVER, TO SUBSEQUENT ACCUSATIONS THAT IT HAS BEEN GULLED INTO SUPPORTING THE NOTORIOUSLY UNTRUSTWORTHY ANGOLO-AMERICANS INSTEAD OF DENOUNCING ANYTHING SHORT OF DRASTIC MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ACTIONS BY THEM DESIGNED

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TO BRING SMITH AND VORSTER INTO LINE. THE GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO BECOME INCREASINGLY DISTURBED ABOUT ITS VULNERABILITY TO SUCH CHARGES IF WEEKS GO BY AND IT APPEARS TO AFRICANS THAT NO REAL PROGRESS IS BEING MADE TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS. THE NATURAL TENDENCY WOULD THEN BE TO LOOK FOR A SCAPEGOAT, AND THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE MUCH TEMPTED TO CHARGE THAT PHE K AND THE US HAD SABOTAGED THE POSSI-

BILITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME BY RDFUSING TO APPLY THE NECESSARY PRESSURE ON SMITH AND VORSTER.

2. KEY PROBLEM AREAS: THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE THAT OF FINDING THE APPROPRIATE INDUCEMENTS, ARGUMENTS AND THREATS WHICH WOULD LEAD SMITH TO UNDERTAKE REAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE CURRENT PROPOSALS. A SECOND KEY PROBLEM IS TO DETERMINE WHEN IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO MOVE FROM THE TALKING STAGE WITH SMITH TO THE ACTUAL APPLICATION OF STRONGER MEASURES AGAINST HIS REGIME.

3. PRINCIPAL DANGERS: A VERY REAL DANGER IS THAT ONE OF THE AFRICAN PRINCIPALS WHO IS NOW FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARDS THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS WILL LOSE PATIENCE IN A MONTH OR TWO IF ANOTHER DECISIVE HAS HAPPENED AND WILL COME OUT IN OPPOSITION TO THE ENTIRE INITIATIVE. THIS MIGHT APPEAR TO OTHER SUPPORTERS LIKE THE START OF A BANDWAGON AND THEY, INCLUDING NIGERIA, MIGHT PUBLICLY JUMP ABOARD. THE PRINCIPAL DANGER TO US POLICY IS THAT EXPECTATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A RHODESIAN SOLUTION HAVE NOW BEEN RAISED TO A HIGHER PITCH THAN EVER AND THAT SUBSEQUENT FAILURE MIGHT THEREFORE PRODUCE A STRONGER REACTION THAN EVER. IT IS ALL TOO LIKELY THAT THE US AND THE UK WOULD BE HEAVILY TARGETTED AS SCAPEGOATS IN SUCH AN EVENT. SUCH A BACKLASH COULD, INTER AQIA, STOP AND EVEN TURN AROUND THE CURRENT FAVORABLE TREND IN US-NIGERIAN RELATIONS.

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4. PRIMARY EFFORTS: IT APPEARS TO US THAT THESE SHOULD AT PRESENT BE DEVOTED TO (1) MAKING IT VERY CLEAR TO SMITH HOW UNPLEASANT THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION ON HIS PART WOULD BE; (2) STAYING IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH ALL THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS TO KEEP SUPPORTERS IN LINE AND SOFTEN THE RESISTANCE OF OTHERS; (3) KEEPING SOME VISIBLE MOMENTUM GOING, INCLUDING THE APPOINTMENT OF A UN REPRESENTATIVE FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

5. DESIRABLE FOLLOW-UP: I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE MAKE CLEAR TO THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT THAT WE WISH TO CONTINUE WORKING ON A PARTNERSHIP BASIS WITH IT ON THIS PROBLEM. MY BRIEF DISCUSSION WITH COMMISSIONER GARBA YESTERDAY ON THIS SUBJECT 8REFTEL B) SHOULD BE ONE OF MANY SUCH CONSULTATIONS. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO KEEP OBASANJO COMPLETELY INFORMED AND CONTINUE TO SEEK HIS RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HOW WE CAN BEST PROCEED. I THINK WE WILL NORMALLY WANT SUCH CONTACTS TO BE BILATERAL ONES RATHER THAN TRILATERAL ONES BECAUSE THE NIGERIANS WILL PROBABLY FEEL SOMEWHAT FREER TO TALK WITH US THAN WITH THE BRITISH.

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